

PRE-SERVICE SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS USING DIGITAL CIVIC RESOURCES

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Whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government.
—Thomas Jefferson, 1789

Introduction

The need for an engaged, informed citizenry is central to the dream of democracy as envisioned by Jefferson. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) places citizenship education “at the heart of social studies” and suggests that social studies teachers must prepare students to develop a “reasoned commitment to fundamental values, such as life, liberty, pursuit of happiness, equality, truth, and promotion of the common good.”¹ Organizations such as the Center for Civic Education, and the National Alliance for Civic Education have also advanced the centrality of civics to social studies.

In the process of developing their students’ civic competence, social studies teachers make use of a range of resources.² Teachers, most typically rely on textbook-related materials, which supply very similar types of information on issues and topics related to democracy, national identity, and diversity.³ Increasingly, teachers are making use of a wide range of online resources that have civic educative value.⁴ These resources, which I will term “digital civic resources” (DCR), are materials which enable teachers and students to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to engage in meaningful civic life and support the National Council for the Social Studies’ description of effective citizenship, outlined in their 2001 position statement on effective citizenship.⁵ Digital civic resources have become almost ubiquitous in their presence and increasingly influential in their use.⁶

Given the easy availability of digital civic resources on the Web, some researchers expect these resources to influence the practice of social studies education.⁷ This study examines patterns of use of digital civic resources by pre-service social studies educators. Emergent patterns will be presented along with the consequences of these uses for teacher education and social studies instruction. Prior to presenting these findings and

the resulting conclusions, related literature on digital civic resources is discussed.

Digital Civic Resources

The resources teachers use when educating young people for civic life are culled from a wide range of sources. Textbooks are the most common source of information for civics students and teachers, while supplemental print materials from organizations such as the *Center for Civic Education* and the *Close Up Foundation* have been available for years. Community-based resources, including in-school visits from civic leaders and field trips to government offices, are also very common. Civic education is now being enhanced by the availability of new digital civic resources accessible through the World Wide Web.⁸ These digital resources share the common characteristic of enabling students to learn in ways that were not possible in print modes.⁹ Digital civic resources have properties that encourage students to actively interpret information; participate in communities of learners; and inquire about socially relevant problems.¹⁰ Educators can use digital media tools such as digital civic resources to construct learning environments that scaffold processes of meaning-making for active learners.¹¹ Other researchers have argued that learning with digital resources can facilitate disciplined inquiry, especially in more open-ended learning environments.¹²

A classification system for DCRs can be constructed from descriptive literature. A review of this literature suggests that these DCRs can be informational, political, or ideological. Informational DCRs include digital legal archives containing local, state, and federal laws, as well as public access to information about the operation of government services.¹³ One example is the United States Library of Congress' federal legislative information system called the Thomas Legislative Information service.¹⁴ Political DCRs can be either partisan or functionary. Partisan Web sites are designed to promote candidates or put forward specific issues or political party positions, while functionary Web sites operate to raise money and/or formally represent candidates or political parties.¹⁵ Ideological DCRs reflect worldviews and often advocate for some political or social change.¹⁶ They are often informal and quite personal, but may also have large institutional backing. Ideologically-driven Web sites often take the form of Web logs. These three categories are in no way exclusive or all-encompassing, but they do enable some of the differentiation of DCRs.

Web logs in education. Web logs, or blogs as they are sometimes known, are actively updated Web sites which include comments, original articles, and links to other articles on the Web. The design of the blog makes

them particularly well-suited to be a DCR. A blog is typically very personal and highly focused. They are easy to set up using free Web-based interfaces, and are even easier to maintain. The development of Web logs was a highly organic almost spontaneous happening. From the earliest days of the Web, the infrastructure and desire for "blogging" was in place, but it was not until 1999 that the term "Weblog" was used. Since then, the number of blogs has skyrocketed into the millions.¹⁷

Blogs are quite often focused on politics.¹⁸ Some educational researchers have suggested that writing and reading blogs can benefit students in K-12 settings.¹⁹ The dynamic nature of blogging, as well as the emphasis on publication, represent the dual hallmarks of writing blogs in educational environments.²⁰ Although much of the literature on using blogs in K-12 and teacher education settings is positive, there are some cautionary issues, including concerns over the public nature of blogs as well as limitations resulting from the technology requirements for blogging.²¹

Method

This study involved twenty-six pre-service teachers in a social studies methods class selecting digital civics resources for use in the classroom and writing annotations on these resources. Participants were asked to select digital civic resources which they might use in their classrooms. This research was conducted during the 2004 presidential campaign, so participants were instructed to select any resources which they felt had instructional relevance with the exception of party or candidate Web sites. Specifically, participants were asked to select three Web site resources from the multitudes of blogs, Web zines, and political news resources which are available online. Participants used their own criteria for selecting the resources, based on their personal and pedagogical interests. After selecting the Web sites, participants were asked to write annotations which included: 1) a summary of the content available on the sites; 2) a consideration how the information on these Web sites might be used in social studies classes; and, 3) an identification of the political perspective or ideology of the resources and a consideration of how the resources might influence, affect, or impact students.

The participants for this study were enrolled in a fourteen-month initial teacher-preparation masters degree program. They all had a degree in a social studies content area, such as history or political science. Participants' ages and experience fell into two broad categories. One group (ten participants) had just completed their undergraduate program. The second group (sixteen participants) was older, having completed their undergraduate studies anywhere from five to twenty-five years prior. Twenty participants were white, five black, and one Asian

American. There were eleven males and fifteen females in the study.

Data, in the form of participants' writings and interviews with participants, were analyzed using the constant comparative method as derived from Barney Glaser and Anslem Strauss' original idea of Grounded Theory.²² The central premise of Grounded Theory is the idea that analysis occurs during data collection and that conceptual models (or theory) explaining phenomena emerge from the analysis of data and are "grounded" in the data. The constant comparative method enables the development of these models or theories. The use of this analytical approach in the study allowed for the development of four emergent findings (synonymous in this study with theory) that are grounded in the data.

The first step in analyzing the data was to develop a system for coding. All data were initially analyzed by coding for the type of resource, the pedagogical uses proposed, the ideological perspectives identified, and the potential problems use of the resources might present in a social studies class. These coding areas were taken directly from the assignment given to participants as described earlier. Ten themes were developed as the data were analyzed, and all data were coded using these themes.²³ After the data were initially coded, they were compared across emerging categories in order to solidify the identity of like categories. The ten themes were collapsed into four categories,²⁴ which served as the foundation for the development of four primary findings.

In addition, a content analysis of the Web sites selected by participants was conducted and is presented in the findings section. There were two separate analyses conducted, one to determine the type of resource and the second to determine the ideological perspective of the resource. The determination of resource type was completed by using the constant comparative method. In our first review of the data for resource type, two broad categories were identified, blogs and non-blogs. The non-blogs were subdivided into eight categories.²⁵ These categories were collapsed, based on overlapping characteristics, into five categories.²⁶ The ideological analysis was done by recording the ideological focus for each site and matching it against the participants' ideological labeling. In the researcher's analysis, liberal was defined as not being limited by traditional or orthodox views and/or favoring reform as well as being open to new ideas and views. Conservative was defined as traditional, less concerned with reform, and less open to new ideas. Participants used their own judgment in determining liberal and conservative perspectives.

The primary researcher and an assistant for this study jointly analyzed the data. The determination of initial categories was completed in an iterative fashion with the researchers passing ideas back and forth. The four primary findings emerged from this joint iterative process.

Independent analyses were conducted to place Web sites by their type and ideological perspective. The researchers were in agreement on all typological and ideological classifications.

Findings

The findings of this study detail the types of DCRs which were selected and annotated by participants, the ideological perspective of the resources, and patterns of the participants' ideas about using these Web-based resources in social studies classrooms. Participants wrote annotations for fifty-seven different DCRs. The resources identified by participants fell into two broad categories, weblog (blog) DCRs, and more extensive and broad DCRs. Extensive resources were focused on issue activism, analysis and opinion, the promotion of individual, single issue, or a combination of these foci (Table 1). The blogs were personalized Web sites that offered opinions or information as well as links provided by an individual weblog owner or a small group of individuals.

Table 1

Types of Digital Civic Resources (DCRs) Selected by Participants

<i>Type of DCR</i>	<i># of Sites</i>	<i>Conservative DCRs</i>	<i>Liberal DCRs</i>
Blog	22	8	14
Combination Sites	13	6	7
Analysis / Opinion	9	4	5
Activist	9	4	5
Promotional	3	2	1
Single Issue	1	1	0
Total	57	25	32

Weblogs

Twenty-two of the fifty-seven unique DCRs identified by participants were blogs. Just two of the blogs were high profile or maintained by individuals in public positions. The *New Democratic Network* (NDN)²⁷ was the high profile blog that was most frequently selected by participants. The NDN was founded by Simon B. Rosenberg, who also serves as president of the organization, and includes high-level advisors like former Clinton Chief of Staff Mike McCurry and former Congressman Vic Fazio. The blog for NDN is written by Rosenberg and NDN vice president Cynthia Rice. Another organizational blog selected by a participant, called *My Vote is My Voice*,²⁸ is home to ten bloggers from across the

country, including a Massachusetts state senator, a former Iowa state legislator, the executive director of the California-based *Latinos for America*,²⁹ several local political organizers, students, and a self proclaimed “stay at home mom.”

The remaining twenty blogs selected by participants were maintained by individuals. Typical of the individual blogs was *Viking Pundit*,³⁰ maintained by Eric Lindholm who is, in his words, “the only conservative in Western Massachusetts.” *Viking Pundit* uses a commercial blog provider called *Blogspot* and posts on a range of topics and issues. Lindholm’s posts are quite short and almost always include a link to outside information. One post on February 25, 2005 illustrates his style.

Irony alert—Before becoming a U.S. Senator (D-NJ), Jon Corzine was the CEO of investment firm *Goldman Sachs*. Corzine spent his career urging investors to place their faith and money in his hands with the promise, one supposes, that private investment would yield a greater return than stuffing cash into a mattress. It’s probably safe to say that Corzine doesn’t have to worry about *his* golden years.

But now, Corzine declares private investment through personal accounts a *terrible idea* and that Americans should be happy with their meager return on government-controlled Social Security. What a tool.

Posted by Eric at 6:49 PM (1) comments

This post included three links, one of which was for comments. A link on the phrase “CEO of investment firm Goldman Sachs,” was to a bio on Corzine from *Project Vote Smart*,³¹ a nonpartisan clearinghouse on political campaign information created in 1992 by a host of national leaders, including former U.S. Presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford. The third link, entitled “a terrible idea,” led to a February 25, 2005 newspaper article from the *Courier-Post* Online, a New Jersey-based Gannett newspaper, about Corzine’s opposition to privatizing Social Security.

Extensive DCRs

Thirty-five of the DCRs selected by participants were more extensive Web sites. Nine of these extensive DCRs were focused on activist politics. These Web sites provided resources and tools to facilitate individual and group political action and included high-profile organizations such as the *American Civil Liberties Union*³² and the *American Conservative Union*,³³ as well as lesser known organizations such as *American Families*³⁴ and *Concerned Women for America*.³⁵ Another nine of the DCRs were focused on analysis and opinion. These Web sites were typically well-funded and multi-staffed and included well-known sites such as *National Review*³⁶ and *Slate*.³⁷ Three of the Web sites selected by participants were promoting individual political analysts, such as Bill O’Reilly. One DCR was focused on a single issue, in this case illegal immigration. Thirteen of the

fifty-seven DCRs selected by participants featured a combination of these foci. These combination Web sites featured, among other things, blogs, news stories, activist tools/information, and/or opinions and analysis. Most of the combination sites were high profile (i.e. *Cato Institute*³⁸ and *Common Cause*³⁹), with considerable resources supporting the publication of the sites.

Eleven Web sites were mentioned by two or more participants. Eight of the combination Web sites were annotated twice. One promotional and two activist DCRs were annotated multiple times. *Move On*⁴⁰ was the only Web site annotated by three people. Given these duplications, there were a total of sixty-nine annotations on fifty-seven unique DCRs.

Ideological Perspective

All of the Web sites selected by participants were analyzed for their ideological perspective. This was done by matching the author's analysis with the participants' labeling of the site. There was agreement on all fifty-seven unique DCRs. Of the fifty-seven unique Web sites, twenty-five were labeled conservative sites, while thirty-two were labeled liberal sites. Of the sixty-nine annotations (including duplicates), thirty-four were on conservative DCRs and thirty-five were on liberal sites. Nine of the eleven Web sites which were duplicated were conservative. Fourteen of the twenty-two blogs (66 percent of the total) annotated by participants were liberal. Seven of the thirteen combination DCRs were liberal, but of the twenty-one total annotations for combination DCRs (thirteen unique sites and eight repeated sites) thirteen were on conservative Web sites (62 percent of the combination DCRs annotated). Five of the eight activist DCRs were liberal. There were nine annotations on activist Web sites (one activist Web site which was repeated), and six of the annotations were on liberal DCRs (67 percent of total activist Web sites annotated). Of the nine unique analysis/opinion DCRs, five were liberal and four were conservative.

Suggested Uses of DCRs

A number of findings emerged with regard to the participants' suggested uses for the Web sites. These findings centered on four themes.

General belief that there is a substantial difference across ninth through twelfth grades with regard to the appropriateness of students engaging with ideologically driven Web resources. Fourteen of twenty-six participants (54 percent of total) expressed some direct concern over the suitability of the content on one or more of the Web sites they selected and annotated, although they were instructed to only select resources which could be used in high school settings. All of the reservations concerned the age at

which high school students would be mature enough or knowledgeable enough to use the resources. All fourteen participants who expressed this concern felt like the resources they annotated would only be useful in eleventh- and twelfth-grade social studies classrooms. Some of these concerns related to language, while others related to the intellectual depth of the material on the sites. Participant 23 described the intellectual depth issue in a manner that was typical among participants saying that she would use one of her resources, *Conservative.org*, "in the 11th and 12th grades, because the topics are covered in more depth."

Several participants were concerned about language or potentially offensive materials available at particular DCRs. In reference to a blog titled *Wonkette*,⁴¹ Participant 3 expressed her concern about the language on the site.

As an adult I can appreciate her light attitude and tone towards the harsh world of politics. Nevertheless, I would not use this site for any of my classes or students. The language is just too harsh. The technique she uses to get her points across is however effective. I may try giving some of my topics goofy titles just to peak the interest of my students. If my students were to read this site it may have taught them a different way of viewing the often stale politics.

Later, she expressed similar age-related concerns this time associated with the level of sophistication which would be needed to use a site titled *Citizen Smash*.⁴² "I would definitely use this site in my upper level history and government courses. I choose upper classmen students because I think they would be able to differentiate between what is fact and opinion."

Other participants were concerned that younger students would be more easily influenced and would be less able to make critical judgments about opinions and views expressed in the Web sites. In an annotation about the *New Democratic Network*,⁴³ Participant 5 expressed a typical age-related concern. "Due to the content of this blog, I am not sure if I would use it in high school. The postings require some knowledge of current events and/or policies. While all students may not be fully able to discern fact from opinion, at least this age group is better equipped for this task than their middle school counterparts." Participant 12 expressed a general concern with the use of the *American Civil Liberties Union*,⁴⁴ one of her selected sites, saying "I would be extremely careful about issues such as gay rights because it could bring out homophobic sentiment in the class." These types of values-based or sensitivity concerns were also common. Participant 11 expressed a similar concern with regard to using a site called *The Liberal Coalition*⁴⁵ saying; "I would only feel comfortable using the site in a secondary classroom with students that are mature and open to debate."

Suggested pedagogical uses for Web sites were sweeping and lacked much subject matter relevance. Participants were, in general, focused on vague pedagogical uses of the material on the Web sites. Instead of mentioning specific subject matter, most participants discussed their plans for teaching with the resources on the Web sites in such a way that would facilitate the completion of generalized tasks. Of the sixty-nine annotations in which instructional ideas were suggested, only twenty-one (30 percent) of these ideas had some relationship to substantive subject matter. The remainder of the instructional suggestions (forty-eight of sixty-nine, or 70 percent) were focused on skill-related tasks which had no subject matter context. The most common of these tasks related to the identification of perspective, comparisons of perspectives, and analysis of perspectives. In all of these generalized instructional examples, no specific subject matter was referenced.

Ten participants developed ideas which related to an analysis of an author's bias in an article or opinion piece on a Web site. Eight of the sixty-nine instructional ideas suggested were analyses of ideological perspectives projected by the DCR. Four participants suggested that students examine their own ideological beliefs. The remainder of the instructional ideas suggested by participants ranged across a wide variety of thoughts including essay writing, listing of facts, explanation of positions, "research," media literacy, current events, and reading.

Typical of assignments which lacked subject matter relevance was a recommendation by Participant 15 for students using a resource called *Democratic Underground*.⁴⁶ "An interesting assignment for a political science or history class in the 11th or 12th grade could be requiring them to take the discussion issue headings and do some basic academic research." Participant 20 recommended the following as a student activity for using another resource called *Reject Liberalism*.⁴⁷ "Students could also use a website like this as a context for exploring the history and role of political parties in the United States." These generalities were common among participants who wrote and talked about students completing non-descript tasks such as "doing research" or "reading material on a site." Even when more specifics were offered, the tendency was to avoid subject matter relevance. Participant 1 proposed a writing assignment following students working with information from a resource titled *American Job Blog*.⁴⁸ "For the lesson, I would try to find some hard statistics and graphs to either prove or disprove what this blog is saying. I would then ask the seniors to compose a short essay on their feelings about this matter based on the statistics they read." In order for this activity to be implemented, the participant would have to select specific content from the resource, find statistics, and structure the writing assignment.

Participants were interested in their students conducting comparisons of ideo-

logical resources. All twenty-six participants suggested some variant of a comparative activity for understanding liberal and conservative ideologies. Most often, participants suggested that a comparable, but ideologically opposite, Web sites be selected for students to use. Some participants provided examples of these ideologically opposite Web sites. Participants thought that students might compare articles, news stories, opinion pieces, or, in limited cases, specific positions on current events. Several participants said they would only use the Web site they were annotating in conjunction with an opposing ideologically-framed DCR.

Typical of the comparisons suggested was this one from Participant 11 who, in reference to her suggested use of a liberal Web site called *The Liberal Coalition* said; "I would have to provide a site that is pro-Bush and supportive of the war in Iraq to balance this site." She expressed the same desire to "balance" another one of her selected resources, a blog titled *The Conch*,⁴⁹ with a "complementary conservative site." Participant 11 continued saying that using these two sites would "be an interesting way to discuss the historic and current differences between the two political parties in the United States." Participant 14 expressed a similar desire when discussing a selected blog resource titled *My Vote is My Voice*.⁵⁰ He suggested that students could be "asked to find a site that represents a competing ideology or political viewpoint," so they might "see a variety of viewpoints and outlets for those viewpoints."

Not all participants directly used the word comparison. Many simply expressed a desire to balance or show differences. When talking about an activity using *Democratic Underground*, Participant 15 wanted to "make sure there are sites of different political ideology involved in the lesson." Other ideas were even more subtle. Participant 2 selected *Punk Voter*⁵¹ as one of her sites and suggested that students could "discuss what they think of the way this site is specifically directed at their age group and they could be required to find at least one more."

Participants were ideologically balanced in the selection of DCRs, but more often than not demonstrated clear ideological preferences for specific sites. Twenty-five of the twenty-six participants were balanced in their selection of DCRs. Only one participant did not have at least one liberal and one conservative site. Fourteen of the remaining twenty-five participants (56 percent of the total) demonstrated an ideological leaning when they wrote about the specific Web sites. These ideological leanings were expressed in a number of ways. Participant 1 selected two conservative sites *American Job Blog*⁵² and *Right Wing News*⁵³ as well as one liberal site *Politics and War Blog*.⁵⁴ He praised the conservative sites as "excellent," and indicated he would have "no problem" using *Right Wing News*. He continued by saying of this conservative site that its use by students would "open them up to this aspect of the right which I believe they hear

much about but are not sure where the 'right' actually stands." Participant 16, the only participant with no liberally oriented resource, selected the Web site for conservative libertarian radio commentator *Neil Boortz*⁵⁵ along with the *Cato Institute* and the *Heritage Foundation*.⁵⁶ He described all three resources as "conservative," referring to Boortz as a "libertarian" who would "side with conservatives the vast majority of the time." He described the *Cato Institute* as "supporting policies of 'market liberalism,'" and the *Heritage Foundation* as "providing support for conservative policies." Despite these declarations, Participant 16 considered the resources to be representative of a range of opinion, expressing a desire to provide students with "an exposure to different political ideologies [that] the students may not receive anywhere else."

The same type of ideological preference among these fourteen participants was evident from the liberal side. Participant 2 selected two liberal sites *Move On* and *Punk Voter* and one conservative site, the Web site for radio commentator *Neil Boortz*. The participant called the conservative Boortz site "controversial" and questioned whether it could be used in class. Conversely, the liberal *Move On* and *Punk Voter* sites were praised as "interesting" in the case of *Punk Voter* and "less controversial" in the case of *Move On*.

Participant 22 also selected two liberal resources, *Common Cause* and *American Progress*⁵⁷ and one conservative resource, *Concerned Women for America*.⁵⁸ He expressed apprehension with using the *Concerned Women for America* resource in the class saying he would be "hesitant to use it at any age because of the strong religious overtones." He continued by suggesting that the Web site was straightforward about its purpose and was not trying to "pass itself off as a nonpartisan resource committed to the unbiased reporting of world events." When discussing the other two resources, Participant 22 did not express concerns about their bias or political preference. He referred to *Common Cause* as an "excellent source of information about the activities of government and political parties." Despite his admission that the resource "leans considerably to the left," Participant 22 thought that it "could definitely be used in the classroom." He spoke in similar terms about *American Progress* saying it is a "liberal organization which believes it must challenge conservative, traditional actions of the current political system," and continued by suggesting that the resource "could be used in the classroom very effectively." The specific use of *American Progress* material suggested by Participant 22 focused on a challenge to what he called "main stream media." By using resources from *American Progress*, Participant 22 thought students would "be able to gain a perspective on some issues they have not understood before hand."

The findings of this study suggest that participants were very comfortable with identifying ideology in digital civic resources and were somewhat concerned about how these ideological perspectives might influence students in high school social studies classes. Although participants were comfortable and adept at identifying ideologies, they did not always limit their own ideological preferences when talking about how they would use these DCRs in class. The distinction between participants' description about how ideologically-framed resources might influence students and their pedagogical thinking about using ideologically-framed resources was noteworthy. While the personal ideologies of teachers are often easy to detect, the manner in which teachers' ideologies influence their pedagogy is more complex.⁵⁹ These complexities emerged in this study and suggest that more direct work was needed to position the pre-service teachers in this study to recognize ideology in their pedagogy. Possibly, instead of simply allowing participants to self-identify ideology, they should be guided in that identification. Or, perhaps a collaborative reflective exercise in identifying ideological preferences in pedagogical thinking would better enable participants and other pre-service teachers to be clear in their pedagogy with respect to ideology.

Given the instructional planning suggested by participants, the pedagogical uses of digital civic resources, particularly blogs, seem to be tied up in personal beliefs and ideologies. This study did not look at actual teaching experiences. Additional research would be needed to determine the extent to which the limitations which emerged in the planning processes would emerge in teaching experiences. The participants in this study were pre-service teachers, so their experiences with teaching were limited, but they had considerable experience with transforming subject matter knowledge into pedagogical knowledge. Given this experience, it was interesting that participants had a difficult time placing DCRs in the context of meaningful subject matter as they developed their instructional ideas. Many of the DCRs selected and annotated by participants were offered up as exemplars of particular ideological perspectives, but without some curricular subject matter relevance (with the exception of the study of political ideology) the resources are of limited value. Additional research is needed to understand why participants did not make more extensive use of subject matter, but one possibility is that their ideological preferences functioned as subject matter, displacing specific events, people, concepts, and ideas which might have framed the suggested pedagogical uses of the selected DCRs.

All participants expressed a need to balance or compare ideologically-based DCRs. The participants in this study seemed to be conveying two things when they said they would suggest comparing ideological DCRs.

On one hand, they wanted students to develop skills in the critical analysis of political information. On the other hand, participants possibly wanted to use these comparisons to express their own ideological perspectives. Over half of the participants clearly expressed their personal ideological preferences when describing the utility of the DCRs they selected. The comparison activities could thus function to provide students with opportunities to practice critical media literacy skills while providing teachers contrary opportunities to subtly indoctrinate.

Although the participants in this study were pre-service teachers and they were only planning for instruction, the findings suggest that if social studies teachers are to make effective use of ideologically-charged digital civic resources, they will need to seriously consider the contexts within which these resources are used. Participants found many resources to be offensive, overly technical, or irrelevant. This is not surprising given the low barriers to publication for blogs and other DCRs. Participants were somewhat limited in making DCRs pedagogically relevant given specific subject matter. Again, one possibility is that the participants' personal ideology inhibited their consideration of relevant subject matter. This lingering question of how a teacher's own ideological preference plays out in the development of instructional activities which make use of DCRs might be addressed by providing students with opportunities to develop their own media literacy skills. If students are enabled to be critical of media resources like DCRs, they might be better equipped to see through teacher-based ideological preference. Given these two limitations (offensive material on some DCRs and teacher ideological preference), it is apparent that teachers will need to be careful and attentive when planning and using digital civic resources.

NOTES

1. National Council for the Social Studies, "Fostering Civic Virtue: Character Education in the Social Studies," <http://www.socialstudies.org/positions/character>.

2. National Council for the Social Studies, *National Standards for Social Studies Teachers* (Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies, 1997).

3. P. G. Avery and A. M. Simmons, "Civic Life as Conveyed in United States Civics and History Textbooks," *International Journal of Social Education* 12, no. 2 (2002): 105-130.

4. C. Frederick Risinger, "Teaching about Civics and Citizenship with the Internet," *Social Education* 66, no.7 (2002): 425-26; C. Frederick Risinger, "Encouraging Students to Participate in the Political Process," *Social Education* 67, no.6 (2003): 338-39.

5. National Council for the Social Studies, "Creating Effective Citizens," *A Position Statement Prepared by the NCSS Task Force on Revitalizing Citizenship*

Education, <http://www.socialstudies.org/positions/effectivecitizens>.

6. Kathryn Montgomery, Barbara Gottlieb-Robles, and Gary Larson, "Youth as E-citizens: Engaging the Digital Generation," *Center for Social Media* <http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/ecitizens/index2.htm>.

7. See Michael J. Berson, Ilene R. Berson, and Jeffery L. Iannone, "Promoting Civic Action Through Online Resources: An Emphasis on Global Child Advocacy," *International Journal of Social Education* 15, no. 2 (2000): 31-42; David Hicks, Joshua Tlou, and John K. Lee, "Global Connections: Using the Internet to Support Citizenship Education," *International Journal of Social Education* 17, no. 1 (2002): 93-102; Risinger, "Teaching about Civic and Citizenship with the Internet," 435-36.

8. See Linda Bennett, "Elementary Civics and the Election Year: Exercises on the Web," *Social Education* 64, no. 5 (2000): 301-03; Berson, Berson, and Iannone, "Promoting Civic Action through Online Resources: An emphasis on Global Child Advocacy," 31-42; Richard W. Riley, "Integrating Civic Values into the Classroom," *Teaching K-8* 31, no. 2 (2000): 8; Risinger, "Encouraging Students to Participate in the Political Process," 338-39.

9. The unique characteristics of digital resources have been discussed by a number of researchers and scholars. For more see, Robert McClintock, "Experience and Innovation: Reflections on Emerging Practice with New Media in Education," *Journal of Educational Computing Research* 25, no. 1 (2001): 95-104; Edward L. Counts, "The Technology of Digital Media: Helping Students to Examine the Unexamined," *Educational Technology* 44, no. 5 (September/October 2004): 59-61.

10. Although the term digital civic resources is not used in the literature, the characteristics of civic education in digital environments has been discussed, see Michael S. Ribble and Gerald D. Bailey, "Digital Citizenship," *Learning and Leading with Technology* 32, no. 2 (October 2004): 12-15.

11. Sadhana Puntambekar and Janet L. Kolodner, "Tools for Scaffolding Students in a Complex Learning Environment: What Have We Gained and What Have We Missed?" *Educational Psychologist* 40, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 1-12.

12. Janet R. Hill and Michael J. Hannafin, "Teaching and Learning in Digital Environments: the Resurgence of Resource-based Learning," *Educational Technology Research and Development* 49, no. 3 (2001): 37-52.

13. John K. Lee, "The E-Citizen," *Social Education* 64, no. 6 (2000): 378-79.

14. Available at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

15. Risinger, "Encouraging Students to Participate in the Political Process," 338-39.

16. John K. Lee, "Ideology and the Web," *Social Education* 66, no. 3 (2002): 161-65.

17. The Internet content matching service PubSub (<http://www.pubsub.com>) was tracking over 8 million blogs as of February 2005.

18. Stephen Phillips, "Where Joe Bloggs Can Have His Say," *The Times Higher Education Supplement* no. 1549 (2002): 20.

19. See M. Lynn Aylward, "Web Logs as an Independent Study Tool," *Journal of Interactive Instruction Development* 16, no. 4 (2004): 22-6; Glen Bull,

Gina Bull, and Sara J. Kajdar, "Writing with Weblogs," *Learning and Leading with Technology* 31, no. 1 (2003): 32-5; Richard E. Ferdig and Kaye D. Trammell, "Content Delivery in the 'Blogosphere'," *T.H.E. Journal* 31, no. 7 (2004): 12, 16-17, 20; J. M. L. Glenn, "Blogging for Teaching and Learning," *Business Education Forum* 59, no. 2 (2004): 8-13; Carol S. Holzberg, "Education Web Logs," *Technology & Learning* 24, no. 1 (2003): 52; Sara Kajder and Glen Bull, "Scaffolding for Struggling Students: Reading and Writing with Blogs," *Learning and Leading with Technology* 31, no. 2 (2003): 32-5; Sara Kajder and Glen Bull, "A Space for 'Writing without Writing': Blogs in the Language Arts Classroom," *Learning and Leading with Technology* 31, no. 6 (2004): 32-5; William Richardson, "Web Logs in the English Classroom: More than Just Chat," *English Journal* 93, no. 1 (2004): 39-43.

20. Kristen Kennedy, "Writing with Web Logs," *Technology & Learning* 23, no. 7 (2003): 11-12, 14.

21. Greg Weiler, "Using Weblogs in the Classroom," *English Journal* 92, no. 5 (2003): 73-75.

22. Barney G. Glasser and Anslem L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (New York: Aldine, 1967).

23. These themes included 1) instructional uses according to age, 2) instructional uses according to grade, 3) instructional uses according to prior knowledge, 4) instructional uses relating to personal ideology 5) instructional uses related to political theory, 6) instructional uses related to comparisons, 7) limitations due to ideology, 8) limitations due to objectionable content, 9) participants preferences for resources based on ideological preferences, and 10) participant descriptions of resources based on subject matter available in the resource.

24. 1) instructional uses, 2) limitations based on age, 3) participants' preferences, and 4) resources and subject matter relevance

25. The initial categories for the non-blog sites were 1) conservative activist, 2) liberal activist, 3) policy, 4) opinion, 5) news, 6) group, 7) individual, and 8) issues.

26. The final five categories for non-blog sites were issue activism, analysis and opinion, the promotion of an individual, and single issue.

27. Available at <http://www.ndnblog.org>.

28. Available at <http://www.myvoteismyvoice.com>.

29. Available at <http://www.latinosforamerica.com>.

30. Available at <http://www.vikingpundit.blogspot.com>.

31. Available at <http://www.vote-smart.org>.

32. Available at <http://www.aclu.org>.

33. Available at <http://conservative.org>.

34. Available at <http://americanfamilies.com>.

35. Available at <http://www.cwfa.org>.

36. Available at <http://www.nationalreview.com>.

37. Available at <http://slate.msn.com>.

38. Available at <http://www.cato.org>.

39. Available at <http://www.commoncause.org>.

40. Available at <http://moveon.org>.

41. Available at <http://www.wonkette.com>.
42. Available at <http://www.lt-smash.us>.
43. Available at <http://www.ndnblog.org/>.
44. Available at <http://www.aclu.org>.
45. Available at <http://liberalcoalition.blogspot.com>.
46. Available at <http://www.democraticunderground.com>.
47. Available at <http://rejectliberalism.org>.
48. Available at <http://www.americanjobblog.com>.
49. The blog, as of July 28, 2005, is no longer available on the Web.
50. Available at <http://www.myvoteismyvoice.com>.
51. Available at <http://punkvoter.com>.
52. Available at <http://www.gregspotts.com>.
53. Available at <http://www.rightwingnews.com>.
54. Available at <http://www.thernf.com>.
55. Available at <http://boortz.com>.
56. Available at <http://www.heritage.org/>.
57. Available at <http://www.americanprogress.org>.
58. Available at <http://www.cwfa.org>.
59. Lee, "Ideology and the Web," 164-65; Asher Shkedi and Gabriel Horenczyk, The Role of Teacher Ideology in the Teaching of Culturally Valued Texts, *Teaching and Teacher Education* 11 (March 1995): 116.